



World Crafts Council Europe

WCC Europe: A Future strategy
October 2013

Operating Context

The current operating context is a challenging one with many European countries in recession and the strength of the European Union under pressure. The arts are under threat because of the reduction in public funding and the crafts sector equally threatened.

However, there are some indications of improvements in the economy and the EU's creative industries, innovation and growth and cultural programmes offer opportunities to the WCC.

The growth of the experience economy has created new opportunities. As consumers have sought 'authenticity' and 'provenance', many have turned to the handmade – in interiors, in fashion and in design. This has been picked up by major brands, keen to position their products as acceptable luxuries in a climate of austerity, while the media is producing a wealth of material that both promotes and parodies a culture of 'make do and mend.'

There is also an increasingly clear role for craft and making in the new relationship between digital and material worlds. A decade ago, craft was seen as a tactile alternative to the digitisation of work and home lives; now, digital fabrication tools and communication technologies are being explored as craft tools and materials in their own right.

The Report and Recommendations of the European Design Leadership Board to the EU identifies the importance of craft both the role of craftspeople in innovation and using their material skills to benefit other industries. Craft enterprises form a significant part of the economy of Europe and as the Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry notes 'there are some characteristics that craft enterprises have in common all over Europe and which reflect the vast majority of micro enterprises at the same time:

- Strong involvement of the owner in all steps of the workflow
- Craft, technical and management competencies
- Active contribution to production of products and services in particular tailor made and single size products or in small quantities
- Proximity to the client and local activities'

Definitions of craft have always been slippery and complex particularly in an international context. There is a spectrum of activity from traditional handiwork which is rooted in particular cultures for example, lace in Malta to the artisanship of Italian leather workers and from the studio glass of Eastern European countries to the more design or fine art related work of Scandinavia. Similarly, business models vary from the individual maker in their studio to the workshops of small scale production employing larger numbers. Many of these aspects of craft are represented in the members of the WCC Europe.

As part of an on-going debate about craft in the 21st century a series of discussions were held about what members of WCC-Europe considered to be the burning issues for craft in their country. WCC Europe members identified the following issues as ones that needed to be addressed.

- Identity and definition – the need for common and strengthened identify within artistic craftsmanship - the sector has suffered from an absence of distinct definition in relation to art or design
- Visibility – the need for greater public recognition of the value of craft
- Education – the need to strengthen craft education in the context of an emphasis on Inter-disciplinary practice
- Government support – a call for increased government support in order to sustain and develop the position of craft
- Representation – the craft community appears to lack cohesion and this results in a lack of inclusion in debates about the creative economy

Organisational

WCC Europe has a strong history as the membership organisation for contemporary craft in Europe. As a regional entity of the World Crafts Council it is one of the most active members of the network of WCC continental bodies.

However, the structure of a national entity per country assumes there are relevant and appropriate bodies in each of the European countries that are able to pay the membership on behalf of their country. There is no clear articulation of benefit or potential involvement for associate members or individual and there are few national entities with the resources to provide the secretariat.

The WCC Europe has focussed on contemporary craft which isn't necessarily relevant to all members or potential member countries. With the changing perceptions of craft there is an opportunity for the WCC to fully represent all its members.

SWOT

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular attendance of members • Committed Board and secretariat • Strong history • a pan European membership • Clarity of governance 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear benefits • Overly formal constitution • Different definitions of craft • Limited means to expand under current governance
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged members • Willingness to change • To refresh WCC Europe • Potential to grow 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreasing budget • Declining membership • Other European craft initiatives • Insufficient staffing

WCC Europe Aims

1. To facilitate networking and collaboration between craft organisations in the EU in order to build capacity and promote craft

Host an annual General Assembly with allied programme of activities which create a forum for exchange and best practice

- 2013, Eindhoven hosted by BNO with visits to Dutch Design Week and invitation to members to present on theme of sustainability of craft businesses
- 2014, Norway – programme to be confirmed

Ensure at least 50% membership attendance
Evaluation of event

Build activity around other major craft and design events

- Select two events annually for WCC members to meet and to promote WCC to a wider sector audience. For example, Schmuck, COLLECT, LDF, Inhorgenta, Maison et Objet.
- 2014, propose Schmuck and ?

Number of attendees
Opportunity for learning and exchange

2. To represent the interests and advocate on behalf the network

Create and develop a relationship with the EU

- Identify and target Directorate Generals to target
- Secure meetings with DGs to present WCC and our case
- Aim to secure funding and/or other forms of support and contacts via culture or enterprise routes

Contacts made
Funding secured

Identify and create a dialogue with craft, design and other relevant agencies

- Start with BEDA Bureau of European Design Associations and ERRIN European regional Research and Innovation Network
- Identify European craft networks

Contacts made
Potential for partnerships identified

Develop a relationship with representatives of strategic international bodies

- Make approach to UNESCO and renew dialogue

- Identify other organisations e.g. IFACCA International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies

Contacts made

Potential for partnerships identified

Promote WCC Europe members and activities

- Launch new website with refreshed content and develop social media campaign
- Conduct a survey to build a comprehensive picture of the network and sector
 - profile of organisations – scale, budget, funding, activities, structure, political context
 - profile of sector – size/value of sector, research reports, best practice

Number of unique users / hits

Full range of craft profiled

3. Develop a strong and dynamic organisation

Play an active role in the WCC International

- Ensure WCC Europe represented in discussions
- Influence decision making process
- Profile European craft in WCC International activities

Ensure an effective and efficient organisation

- Produce business plan and update regularly
- Maintain up to date financial records with annual audit and report to GA
- Maintain up to date membership records
- Increase secretariat resource

New business plan and three year budget

Clean audit

Grow the membership

- Ensure regular communication with members
- Draft new membership proposals and present to GA 2013 for approval
- Identify potential new members and lapsed members

New membership proposal agreed

Increased membership over next four years – two members per annum

Targets to achieve by 2016

- Increased membership and income – 4 per annum

- Increased income from other sources – commencing 2015
- Wider range of relationships established – 1 per annum
- Increased level of activity on website – x hits/unique visitors
- Regular programme of initiatives - 1 project per annum commencing 2014
- Regular networking - 1 GA per annum / 1-2 per annum commencing 2014